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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ABU DHABI 000460

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FOR CNO ROUGHEAD
STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/FO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PARM](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: CNO VISIT TO UAE

REFS: A) ABU DHABI 356 (GSD READOUT)
B) ABU DHABI 296 (GSD SCENE SETTER)
C) ABU DHABI 325 (COUNTER-PROLIFERATION TASK FORCE)

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Martin Quinn, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Admiral Roughead: Embassy Abu Dhabi looks forward to your April 16-18 visit to the UAE, arguably the most important facilitator of naval operations among the Gulf countries. We are seeking meetings with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed (MbZ) al-Nahyan, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister (and Ruler of Dubai as well as nominal Defense Minister) Mohammed bin Rashid (MbR) al-Maktoum; and senior military leaders. Issues in Dubai might usefully focus on our appreciation for the UAE's hosting of U.S. ships, while conversations with MbZ should address the full range of strategic cooperation.

¶2. (C) Your visit follows those of other senior U.S. military officers, including Commander US Central Command Admiral Fallon (Feb 20-21), Chief of Staff of the Air Force General Moseley (Feb 11-13), Secretary of the Air Force Wynne (Feb 3-5), and Commandant of the Marine Corps General Conway (Nov 20-21); that serve as a reminder to the UAE of the value we place on our partnership. The Commander in Chief, President Bush, paid a visit in January as well. Your visit in particular comes at an opportune time with the March 25 agreement by the UAE's General Headquarters (GHQ) to formally participate in the Combined Maritime Forces command.

¶3. (S) MbZ will be interested in current U.U. thinking on Iraq and Iran, continued cooperation with the U.S. in the mission in Afghanistan, and reminders that the USG values the UAE contribution in the AOR. In expressing appreciation for this outstanding partnership, we also like to remind the UAE that the evolving nature of military requirements mandates an ongoing focus on joint planning, coordination, and strategic interoperability.

Support from the UAE

¶4. (S) The U.S. continues to enjoy strong defense cooperation with the UAE. Nowhere is this more readily apparent than in the approximately 450 U.S. naval ship visits made annually to the UAE, making the UAE the number one foreign port of call for the USN. We suggest you thank your UAE interlocutors at all levels for the country's strong support for the Navy and for its continued willingness to provide access, hospitality and security for our Sailors and Marines. In addition to the extensive naval logistics support provided, the UAE provides

critical basing and over-flight authorization for USAF aerial reconnaissance and refueling assets. The nation also continues to work together with the U.S. in key aspects of the war on terror, including the placement of special operations troops on the ground in Afghanistan since 2003, providing security assistance for Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, and is assisting virtually every trouble spot in the region in need of reconstruction support. A few quantitative measures of bilateral cooperation include:

- over 450 naval port visits last year;
- more than 125,000 U.S. servicemen and women enjoying liberty annually in the UAE;
- 1,800 USAF personnel at Al Dhafra Air Base;
- a vigorous multinational air training schedule at the Air Warfare Center at Al Dhafra;
- the F-16 Block 60 program;
- over 24,000 US military aircraft over flights/landings in 2007;
- approximately 250 UAE Special Operations forces serving with the Coalition in Afghanistan. Past operational deployments to Kuwait, Lebanon, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo.

15. (S) These contributions are significant in scope but also enduring in their continuity over many years. The ports of Jebel Ali and Fujairah, and Minhad Air Base, are vital to U.S. Navy interdiction operations, re-supply and sustainment and combat support efforts across the region. Your scheduled visit to Dubai Ports World in Jebel Ali on April 17 will include a briefing on the future potential of Dubai World Central's new airport, to be the world's largest, to further support naval logistics through the establishment of a major air-sea-land regional hub at Jebel Ali.

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Deepening naval engagement

16. (S) The UAE's naval security is distributed between several commands. The UAE Navy is concerned primarily with countering the Iranian Navy and IRGC-N. Its acquisition of units such as the new Baynunah class corvette, which will be briefed to you April 16 during your tour at the Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding yard, reflects its focus on conventional naval threats. The Coast Guard is primarily responsible for securing Emirati territorial waters and offshore economic interests. Long considered somewhat of a stepchild passed between Ministry of Interior and the Navy, the UAE Coast Guard is now an independent military service which has been receiving increased government resources. NAVCENT has been engaging the UAE Coast Guard in a commensurate fashion, and the Coast Guard is now represented at Navy-to-Navy staff talks (last held in February in Abu Dhabi). Recently added to this Navy-Coast Guard mix is the Critical National Infrastructure Authority (CNIA), originally part of GHQ but now an independent entity focused on security of the UAE's offshore oil infrastructure as part of its larger mandate of securing all critical infrastructure.

17. (S) One of NAVCENT Commander VADM Cosgriff's top priorities has been to get the UAE Navy and/or Coast Guard to join the Combined Maritime Force (CMF), aka "the coalition." We recommend complimenting the UAE on its recent (March 25, 2008) decision to join this flexible organization, which will enable the UAE to gain increasing advantages of coordination and intelligence sharing to help protect the UAE's maritime interests, including its offshore critical energy infrastructure. It is of note that the UAE's decision to formally join the maritime coalition was reportedly done at the insistence of MbZ over the objections of his military Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Mohammed Hamad Thani Al Rumaithy, who was uncomfortable linking the UAE so publicly with U.S. military interests. As with most areas of joint military cooperation, the UAE prefers to work quietly and behind the scenes with us, with no public acknowledgment of

its role.

¶18. (C) In addition to encouraging the UAE to move forward with its coalition participation, another point on which we request UAE assistance is the relocation of housing as well as operational and administrative facilities for the U.S. Navy inshore boat unit at Fujairah, which provides water-side security for U.S. ships in the port of Fujairah. Due to force protection concerns, USLO's number one priority is to move berthing and operations inside a more secure perimeter within the new UAE naval base at Fujairah (facilities under development). The UAE has given approval for working groups to discuss the issue, but it would be advantageous to get senior leader buy-in during your meetings.

¶19. (C) Similarly, the impending closure of Dubai's Port Rashid to commercial and military ship visits will reduce NAVCENT's port visit options. The potential for Abu Dhabi's new port "Mina Khalifah," to be built at Tawilah (between Abu Dhabi and Dubai), to include designated piers capable of supporting USN carrier visits is worth raising in your conversations to facilitate future efforts to work that issue with Emirati officials.

¶10. (C) the UAE's growing concern with critical infrastructure security provides another opportunity for maritime engagement. Although CNIA is an Abu Dhabi emirate agency technically not part of the GHQ military structure, it is staffed primarily by military officers and currently draws on military units for any necessary crisis response units. CNIA is still very much in its formative phases, creating its own internal TTPs while also trying to define how it will interact and coordinate with other government agencies. Most noteworthy is that CNIA has the personal patronage of MbZ and you might wish to ask MbZ directly what he sees as CNIA's mandate. Current U.S. engagement with CNIA is focused on maritime critical infrastructure protection. At the late February MIPS conference VADM Cosgriff met separately with the UAE delegates to discuss U.S.-UAE cooperation on critical infrastructure protection. NAVCENT is following up on these efforts and is currently pursuing a UAE and Coalition solution to critical infrastructure protection.

The UAE's threat picture: Iran in focus

¶11. (S) MbZ continues to insist that Iran is the UAE's most
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serious and long-term threat. The UAE military has long viewed Iran as its top security threat in spite of the extensive economic relationship the two countries share. As such, Iran will top the agenda in terms of putting regional threats into perspective. UAE military planners will continue to focus on it as the primary driver of defense procurements. MbZ will stress the continual concern that Iran poses to the UAE; he will speak out in private with USG interlocutors against the "superpower" ambitions of his Persian neighbor. Iranian meddling in Iraq and Lebanon will be underscored by UAEG officials.

¶12. (S) Iran is the large neighbor that will not go away, so the UAE feels a need to engage (particularly on the economic side and especially in Dubai) with a potential foe in this rough and unforgiving neighborhood. While assisting our mission in the region, the UAE leadership has consistently pursued a cautious, non-confrontational, public posture towards Iran. In the past, the UAE has been hesitant to participate in military exercises designed to show a strong defensive front against Iran. The UAE did, however, send observers to Leading Edge 07 in October 2006, which had a Proliferation Security Initiative theme. The decision to host Eagle Resolve 2008, with a Theater Air and Missile Defense theme, is another praiseworthy step. The recent announcement during French President Sarkozy's visit of a French military presence in Abu Dhabi is another indication

of UAE willingness to send a strong signal to Iran. Nonetheless, with an estimated 400,000 Iranians in the UAE, MbZ will be cautious about a direct confrontation. Iran is an adversary to prepare defenses against, which the UAE is doing. Yet, it considers a certain level of engagement to be part of that defense, including, apparently, MbR's February 18 trip to Tehran.

¶13. (S) In spite of the dichotomy of the UAE balancing its interests -- engaging with Tehran on the one hand and preparing defenses against it on the other -- it is our interest to keep the focus on defense preparations. MbZ consistently emphasizes the need for contingency planning and uses the looming threat from Tehran as the basis for U.S. weapons sales to the UAE. He remains urgent about setting up a defense architecture against Iranian missiles. He most recently discussed Shared Early Warning with General Moseley in February, and his Chief of Military Intelligence in March received, at personal request, a tailored assessment of the Iranian missile threat to the UAE from Lieutenant General Maples at DIA. MbZ often states the need to U.S. officials -- as he did in February with Air Force Secretary Wynne -- to prepare to "go across the border" in self-defense if necessary (ref b). His past and planned future military purchases - F-16 and Mirage fighters, Black Shaheen ALCMs, Airbus aerial refueling aircraft, AEW&C and ISR aircraft, imagery satellites) all point toward the acquisition of deep strike capability that if nothing else may provide a credible deterrent to give Iran pause with regard to any notion of retaliating against the U.S. via the UAE.

¶14. (S) Iran is a known threat and we should work methodically to bolster our mutual defenses without expecting the UAE to show a more public antagonism towards Tehran; it has long since decided that it cannot afford to do so. Among the measures we should continue to pursue are a robust joint exercise regime, missile defense planning, UAE participation in PSI exercises, and increasing UAE participation in coalition activities at NAVCENT.

Procurement always on MbZ's mind

¶15. (S) UAE DEFENSE PROCUREMENT STATUS: The UAE has committed billions to current and anticipated Foreign Military Sales cases, in addition to over \$8.5 billion in direct commercial sales in the Block 60 F-16 program, one of the premier security assistance portfolios in the region. The total current FMS portfolio (signed cases and cases in development) is valued at approximately \$22 billion.

¶16. (S) At the invitation of the Pentagon and State Department to deepen the security relationship by cooperating on an integrated missile defense shield, the UAE last year submitted Letters of Request on the Patriot (nine PAC-3/GEM-T batteries), Surface Launched Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (SL-AMRAAM) (8 fire units), and Theater High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) system (3 fire units), for an estimated total value of \$17 billion. It now wants the USG to make good on our offer of enhanced engagement by pressing for

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expeditious approval of these sales in the Congress, and will be looking for specifics on where we are in that process, particularly in regard to THAAD, which the UAE has articulated is essential to a complete Air and Missile Defense architecture. Currently, only the Patriot has Congressional approval and a draft offer has been delivered to the UAE. The UAE will see our posture as a critical measure of USG willingness to stand by the UAE in a contingency involving Iran.

¶17. (S) Other pending weapons sales include: three E2-C Hawkeye AEW&C aircraft (in LOA negotiations) as an interim solution until delivery of a more permanent AEW&C platform (that down-select/decision not expected until summer-2008);

Harpoon missiles originally purchased for shipboard use are being converted for use on the F-16; Evolved Sea Sparrow Missiles are being integrated on the Baynunah corvettes; High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS, case was signed and is being implemented now, valued at \$597M); 40 UH-60M Blackhawk helicopters for its Special Operations Command (the UAE has already signed a case, which is now being implemented and valued at \$807M, for 26 Blackhawks, and an additional 14 are pending Congressional notification); 20 additional Blackhawks via Direct Commercial Sales from Sikorsky; ongoing upgrade of AH-64 Apache helicopters to the "D" (LONGBOW) model; 1300 Hellfire missiles (with the expectation of a request for an additional 1200 missiles); and additional weapons for their F-16s (three Letters of Request have been received, valued at over \$800M). The UAE is also seeking integration with Shared Early Warning, GCCS-M, LINK-11, Link-16, and the classified internet, CENTRIX. Considering the threat and the available cash reserves, the UAE is seeking to purchase all the latest defense technology. Despite the threat to the UAE, they still require financial offsets arrangements prior to awarding defense contracts.

Iraq: another challenge

¶18. (S) The UAE appreciates the fact that there have been measured security gains on the ground in Iraq but remains skeptical of the enduring strategic implications of those gains. Still very skeptical of a Shi'a-dominated government it believes is controlled from Iran (and still coddling Iyad Allawi as Iraq's most viable leadership candidate), the UAE's stance towards Baghdad remains too passive. It should be pressed to play a more active and facilitating role, particularly with regard to re-opening its Embassy in Baghdad, more proactively facilitating a visit to the UAE by PM Nuri al-Maliki, granting long term debt relief, answering UN appeals to assist Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria, and easing Iraqi visa restrictions for such events as the planned May 26-28 U.S./MNF-I sponsored coalition conference in Abu Dhabi.
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